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WORLD HEALTH
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GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Speech by Congressman John E. Fogarty, Democrat,
Rhode Island, Chairman House Appropriations
Committee for Health, Education and Welfare

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Although I had the pleasure, on behalf of the United States delegation, of welcoming Colombia on the occasion of its admission into the World Health Organization, this may be the only occasion on which I will be able to speak in more general terms about the critically important work of this Organization that is dedicated to improving the health status of the people of the world... and, through its health programs, to improving understanding among the nations of the world.

Coming back to Geneva is, for me, like returning home, for the pleasant recollections of my visit here to the Tenth World Health Assembly are many and deep. I recall how privileged I felt to participate in what has been called man's highest endeavour: working together for the advancement of health.

A few months ago, in addressing the Congress of the United States, I sought to convey something of the spirit of friendship which the World Health Assembly engenders, and of the cooperative action which results from mutual understanding and from the recognition of common needs. "Respect for each other, concern in each other's problems, sharing ideas and experiences, and constructive help characterize these great assemblies," I said.

The goals of the World Health Organization, and the relationship of its program to regional and national health activities, are splendidly illustrated in the report on Pan-American health now under consideration. There has been brought into being a unified program which not only permits but actively fosters both an effective interchange among the nations of two continents and an effective linkage of these activities with those of WHO on a world-wide basis.

Speaking for the United States delegation, I wish to express particular gratification at the selection of Dr Horwitz of Chile as the new Director of the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau, and at his recognition by the World Health Organization as their official representative in these areas. Dr Horwitz, who has made many distinguished contributions to the public health, is the first Latin American Director of the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau in the 57 years of its history, and we of the United States are proud of his selection, wish him well, and will do everything we can to assure the full cooperation of the United States in the work of the Bureau.

In his report, Dr Horwitz comments on a wide range of activities of interest to the health professions and of significance to the health of the people of the Americas. Among these, and illustrative of how the Bureau works, are the intensive, controlled studies of the live virus vaccine against poliomyelitis -- studies that are being carried out in Costa Rica. There is of course world-wide interest focussed on the prevention of this disease. The United States, which played such a fundamental part in bringing the killed virus vaccine into general use several years ago, looks with interest on this possible new step in the prevention of disease. We are pleased to have been able to accede to a request from Dr Horwitz that we contribute technically trained personnel to add to those

already available from Costa Rica, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, and the World Health Organization, to the end that these studies may be carried out both expeditiously and effectively.

Dr Horwitz's report also comments on the importance of potable water supplies as a factor in health. The United States delegation has a special interest in this topic, concurs with the general premises set forth in the report, and will await with keen interest the discussion of this topic.

A third topic of special interest to me and to our delegation is the increasing emphasis Dr Horwitz feels should be placed not only on the training of health personnel but also on investigations and research, particularly those involving field studies and demonstrations. The United States delegation is in complete agreement with Dr Horwitz that such research is a vitally important aspect of the prevention and control of disease, and we look with favour upon the extension of such studies in all fields of research, and throughout the world.

It has been my observation that the proceedings of the World Health Assembly, in addition to providing opportunity for formal expressions of policy, also permit expressions of individual views as long as they are so identified. This is not to imply that the observations I am about to make do not represent the consensus of the United States delegation. There has simply been no opportunity for me to assure myself that they are their views.

Among other aspects of health, I have long been deeply concerned with the strengthening of medical and public health research as the indispensable partner of medical and public health practice. It is my belief that they go hand in hand, and that -- when one looks at health in perspective -- one cannot go forward at an optimum rate without the other. And I have been unwilling to be satisfied with less than an optimum rate. I am as an individual, and as a member of the Congress of the United States, committed to the belief that we must do everything we can to use, to apply, today's knowledge today. I am also committed to the belief that we must invest today in the acquisition of new knowledge for tomorrow -- in the training of people, in the development of health facilities, and in the conduct and support of health research.

In this respect, I draw my conviction from many years of active participation in the health affairs of our government. Even more important, I draw my conviction from the people I represent.

Let me tell you very briefly what has happened in the United States in that part of our national health effort that is identified as medical and related health research.

During the past fifteen years, support of medical research in the United States has increased seven-fold. Associated with this rapid growth has been a dramatic increase in research productivity, as measured by the means to prevent and control disease. At the base of this impetus to the search for new knowledge has been the earnest desire of the people for better health -- not just for themselves, but for generations yet unborn, in our nation, and in all nations.

Both private and public agencies have participated in the evolution of expanded activities in the health research field, bringing into being a pattern which now finds half of all such research supported by the Federal government, and the other half by private funds - philanthropy, endowment, and industry.

The first key element here is public interest and support. The people recognize that health is a primary national resource and that a sound investment in medical research is necessary if the public health is to be protected and maintained. By its actions, our government - with which I am proud to have been associated for twenty years - carries out the expressed will of the people. For most of these years, my committee assignment has been to review the Federal government's programs in the labor field and in the fields of health, education and welfare, and then recommend appropriations for these activities. Thus it has been my privilege to have an active role in broadening and strengthening the health programs which represent what the people of the United States feel should be accomplished in working toward the prevention, amelioration, and eradication of disease.

The second key element is a recognition that health research cannot be defined or conducted in national terms. The world of medical science transcends geographic and political separations and focusses only on the problems of health and disease in man. Thus it is clearly understood by our people that the research supported by their funds - whether tax funds or private contributions - is being used in part to strengthen international collaboration and to foster international exchange in the health sciences. They recognize, too, that such collaboration represents one of the very best possible opportunities to demonstrate that nations can learn to work together and that it is possible to envision a lasting peace based on understanding and good will rather than on armed truce. There is ample evidence in the United States this year that our own international health activities will increase markedly in pursuit of the dual goal of health and peace.

It is for these reasons that I am delighted to see that the report by Dr Horwitz for the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau does emphasize research as a fundamental part of the Bureau's activities. I feel that every nation in the world has something to contribute in a substantive sense to an international collaborative effort in health research. And it is my hope that this concept of a balanced and comprehensive health program, including both research and service, will find expression in the actions of this World Health Assembly.

In conclusion, may I convey the profound admiration, deep respect, and lasting gratitude of all people everywhere to you whose dedicated work will surely lead to better health for millions of men, women, and children. Whether you are doctors of medicine or doctors of science, nurses or welfare workers, health educators or sanitary engineers, you are truly the physicians, the healers of the world.

The barriers that threaten to impede progress toward better world health are complex and difficult to surmount, penetrate, or demolish. But, let us never forget that the barriers are to a certain extent man-made. Let us remember that with sustained and enlightened effort, the goals that are beyond the barriers can be reached, must be reached and will be reached.